

New sanitation plant produces cleaner Tigris, Iraq

by Spc. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown

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LSA ANACONDA, Iraq – Thanks to a new wastewater treatment plant built and opened here last month, the Army is now helping create cleaner water for the people of Iraq.

The plant, which processes 1.6 million gallons of wastewater per day, will be used in conjunction with an older treatment plant on LSA Anaconda that processes 1.1 million gallons, said Lt. Col. Chuck F. Blaschke III, an engineer for the 35th Area Support Group.

Blaschke, a National Guard Soldier from Lee's Summit, Mo., said the plant was built so that excess wastewater did not need to be sent

outside of LSA Anaconda to be processed, and to help the environment in Iraq.

Now, all the wastewater that is produced on Anaconda can be treated here, Blaschke said.

The plant, which took more than 500 days to construct and cost approximately \$5.6 million, is not only providing a more efficient and effective treatment facility, but also creating cleaner water for Iraq.

"We are pumping cleaner water into the (Tigris) canal than we are taking out," Blaschke said.

The water used here to shower, brush teeth, and drink is drawn from a canal near LSA Anaconda that originates at the Tigris, he said. This water is then treated for its different uses.

Similarly, the treated wastewater, or effluent, is pumped back into the same canal after going through testing.

"The good news is that our effluent water is cleaner than the original canal water," Blaschke said. "We are environmentally good stewards by building this new plant."

LSA Anaconda was built in the 1980s for a population of about 6,000, Blaschke said. The LSA Anaconda originally had no living quarters, but all housing was located at a small village outside the LSA Anaconda called Bakir.

Bakir village had a water sanitation and wastewater treatment plants to serve the small population that was originally there, Blaschke said.

With the population boom at Anaconda in 2003, a small sanitation plant was built to process the expected waste. With approximately 25,000 people currently on LSA Anaconda, about half of Anaconda's waste had to be trucked to Bakir village to be treated—and it was only treated marginally, Blaschke said.

The sanitation standards in Bakir village are not the same as U.S. standards, and the smaller plant there was receiving



Photos by Spc. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown

Lt. Gen. Carl A. Strock, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Col. Mark W. Hampton, 35th Area Support Group commander, along with a KBR representative cut the ribbon on LSA Anaconda's new wastewater treatment plant July 31.

more waste than it could efficiently handle, so tainted water was being pumped straight into the Tigris, Blaschke said.

Lt. Gen. Carl A. Strock, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, was one of three visiting generals who spoke at the new plant's ribbon-cutting ceremony July 31.

Strock said that allowing overflow waste to continue being treated in Bakir village would hurt Iraq's environment in the long run, and send a bad message to the Iraqi people.

"(The waste) caused hazardous conditions in the surrounding village," Strock said. "And what kind of impression is that going to leave with the Iraqis here about what the Americans have done as they've come in, and in the process of putting this country back on its feet, the local people may be suffering in some ways."

"So what this does is alleviate the poten-

tial suffering, it cleans up the water in the surrounding communities, and it really demonstrates to our Iraqi partners that we are here to contribute to the long-term safety and stability here in Iraq," he said.

Also in attendance at the ribbon-cutting ceremony were Maj. Gen. William H. McCoy and Brig. Gen. Michael Walsh, both Army Corps of Engineer officers, who were here with Strock to tour LSA Anaconda.

"The good news is, because we built the new wastewater treatment plant, it minimized anything we had to send to Bakir village," Blaschke said.

In closing the ceremony, Strock said, "It's concrete, it's steel, and it's science all coming together in a very effective way, and I'm honored and delighted to play a small role in kicking this project off."



Lt. Gen. Carl A. Strock, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, spoke at the opening of the new wastewater treatment plant at LSA Anaconda, July 31.



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